

# The Library Assistant :

*The Official Journal of the Library Assistants' Association.*

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Owing to circumstances that could not be foreseen the Council regret to announce there will be **no ordinary Meeting during May.**

The **Twenty-third Annual Meeting** will be held in June on a date yet to be fixed, and the Council is hoping to present an attractive programme for that occasion. Nominations will be required for Officers and for a vacancy on the Council, but full details will appear in the June issue of the Journal.

## EDITORIAL.

**The Future of the Librarian.**—We commend to the notice of our members an article by an anonymous writer which appears in the March issue of "The Library World." Under the title of "The Public Librarian and his Future" is discussed some of the possible results of the removal of the rate limit and in particular its effect upon staffs. The writer argues that greater demands will be made upon the educational attainments of assistants, and that the tendency will be to divide them into two grades—"the preparers, repairs, and replacers of books, runners, clerical assistants, and so forth," and the librarian proper. He also asserts that "if you are to compete with any hope of success with the men and women which present librarians are calling for, you must possess a university stamp upon your knowledge," which assertion he follows up by recommending the aspiring assistant to drop *formal* library studies for the present and take matriculation. We have always

held that the removal of the rate limit might create conditions which some of the loudest grumblers about small pay and long hours might live to rue, and all our members, especially the younger ones, will do well to ponder the question, examining themselves closely as to what it actually means to them.

**Two Important Letters.**—The attention of our readers is directed to the two important letters printed below. Although they deal with widely divergent topics, both relate to subjects of immediate interest, which we hope to return to later. In the meantime we shall be glad to receive any views that our readers may have upon them.

*To the Editor of "The Library Assistant."*

DEAR SIR,—As a member of the Library Assistants' Association, may I be permitted to suggest that we are letting the grass grow under our feet at a time when a determined and organized effort towards the reform of working conditions would be particularly opportune.

Probably in the whole course of its existence, our Association has never reached a period when general economic conditions have been so favourable for making a vigorous protest against low wages, long hours and too exacting work. And yet we remain passive.

In its capacity of Trade Union, the only really useful thing which the L.A.A. has done during the past two or three years has been to set up a register of assistants requiring new positions. Beyond that, it has remained almost purely a learned society.

As such, its work is useful enough; but it does not satisfy the need of library workers for a fighting combination to control working conditions.

Added to the many questions of long-standing which ought to be definitely dealt with, problems have arisen which are peculiar to the present situation. Such are, the future position of War-time assistants and the prospects of library workers returning from the Forces. The questions of hours and salaries have long been stumbling blocks.

Surely the time to take a firm stand over these matters is now, when the comparative scarcity of labour gives all grades of workers an added value and (in many cases) independence.

There is probably only one culmination for the present trend of feeling. The real question at issue is whether the L.A.A. shall be elected as the recognized instrument, or whether a new society shall be formed.

Whichever is decided upon, a definitely offensive policy is needed. Library work should be classified and graded; a minimum wage for each grade of work fixed and demanded; and a maximum working day for each grade of work decided upon.

If I may I would suggest the following method of organization of the body concerned:—

1. **Branches.** MEMBERSHIP:—Individual library assistants. Assistants to be at liberty to join any Branch. **Work:**—To prepare local statistics; to discuss questions of policy; to consider the recommendations and complaints of individual members; to make Branch recommendations to the Central Council; to carry out decisions of the Central Council.

2. *Central Council. MEMBERSHIP*:—Two representatives from each Branch. *Work*:—To consider Branch recommendations; to consider recommendations of individual members, which have been rejected by the Branches; to issue manifestos to Library authorities; to take steps, where necessary, to enforce compliance; to effect any desirable affiliations with other Unions; to make decisions on policy generally.
3. *Annual Conference of all members. Business*.—Annual election of the Central Council; appointment of officers; general discussion.

With very little organization, the existing machinery of the L.A.A. could be adapted to the needs of an aggressive body such as I have outlined. Are we going to rise to the occasion?

I am,  
Very truly yours,

MARJORIE PEACOCK.

Wallasey Public Libraries,  
The Earlston Library, Liscard, Cheshire.  
17th April, 1918.

[NOTE.—The publication of this letter must not be taken to indicate that the writer's views have the support of the Council of the L.A.A. While it has worked steadily for 23 years to secure better conditions for library assistants throughout the country, the Association is not, and never has been, a Trade Union. We hope to return to the subject of the letter in our next issue.—ED.]

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*To the Editor of "The Library Assistant."*

DEAR SIR,—We are tempted to wonder sometimes if enough is made of the inspirational value of libraries to the readers who use them. In pre-war days it was common enough to hear librarianship described as "an inspiring profession," and one to which any man might be proud to belong. We are not disputing this by any means, having a profound belief in the truth of the idea and counting unfortunate those library workers who are not inspired with the opportunities their calling offers, but it is questionable whether much effort is made to inspire readers, particularly in the direction of their attitude towards life. Lists of books and special catalogues dealing with the literature of technical, scientific, and literary subjects have been numberless, but we do not recall any that have had for their purpose the direction of readers' minds to the things of the spirit, apart from dogmatic theology *per se* that is. Admittedly it is not an easy thing to do, but that is no reason why it should not be attempted; and after all, to encourage a reader to nobler aspirations, to attract him to higher ideals, to implant deeper and more goodly thoughts is surely a greater achievement than to have even guided a man into a more intelligent way of earning his living! There is no lack of suitable literature for the purpose, but the cause of our hesitation to bring it into prominent notice is probably the natural shyness of the average Englishman to make himself busy in this sphere. Tact, a live sense of the general fitness of things, and some courage are essential qualifications for anyone intending to proceed in this direction. Are there no librarians possessed of these and willing to venture?

Faithfully yours,

A MEMBER.

**Examinations.**—We take this opportunity of wishing success to all candidates for the forthcoming professional examinations, which will be held in London and at other centres during the week commencing 13th May.

**Our Colleagues on Active Service.**—We are in a position to be able to say that our colleagues on active service have continued to distinguish themselves during the recent operations on the Western Front. When the time arrives that we shall be permitted to publish fuller particulars, we venture to think that we shall all have reason to be even more proud of our colleagues' services. We grieve to learn, however, that several of them have been reported as "missing," and that Mr. F. C. Bullock, of the Cardiff Public Libraries, who gained the Military Medal some time ago, has fallen.

We should like once more to seek the co-operation of every reader in helping to make our Roll of Honour as complete as possible, and in securing for the Album of Honour a portrait of every library worker on active service.

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### LIBRARY ASSISTANTS AND THE FUTURE.\*

By ARCHIBALD SPARKE, F.R.S.L., F.L.A., Chief Librarian,  
Public Libraries, Bolton.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I should like to thank the Members of the North-Western Branch of the Library Assistants' Association very warmly indeed for placing me in the position which I occupy for the first time this afternoon as their President. I consider it a distinct mark of their confidence and some acknowledgment of the interest which I have always taken in the welfare of assistants. As you are probably all aware my committee have for some years given every encouragement to their staff to educate themselves so that they will be able, when the proper time comes, to enter into competition with assistants of other up-to-date libraries, and to find themselves successful when the competition is over. It may be news to some of you that during the last 12 years nearly 20 senior assistants have left Bolton for improved

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\*Presidential Address delivered at a Joint Meeting of the N.W. Branch of the L.A.A. and the Manchester Library Assistants at Bolton on March 20th, 1918.

positions elsewhere, and that over 120 certificates of the Library Association have been gained by past and present members of the staff during their career in Bolton. I do not wish to claim any measure of credit for this, but would like to place the credit on the shoulders of the individuals, who have not been slow to take advantage of the opportunities, and privileges, which my committee have been good enough to allow them.

It seems to me that although Public Library Administration has been going on for the past seventy years we have now come to a turning point regarding their administration. The conditions of work will be vastly changed in the future. It will be of the first importance to get into direct touch with the readers, and endeavour to surmount the great difficulty of making people understand the educative influence of the public library. We shall then have to be sure that the material which we purchase and place at their disposal is the very best of its kind. It is not much use purchasing huge quantities of books unless we can organize those books in such a way that the public can get what they want with a minimum of difficulty.

The great proportion of this new work will fall on the shoulders of you assistants, because, in a very little time you will have become librarians. It is just as true now that the library assistant of to-day will be the librarian of to-morrow as it was when it was said, if it ever was said. The catalogues of the future must be something more than mere titles of books. Special lists, carefully annotated, must be provided, especially perhaps in the useful arts sections, textile industries, chemical technology, engineering, and the various branches of commerce, all must be carefully attended to.

The public will, I believe, demand a great deal more from the librarians of the future, and it will be your duty to ascertain their requirements and place at their disposal the whole resources of your libraries, and perhaps go even further than this; it will be necessary for you to know where the desired information can be obtained if it cannot be got from your own shelves.

An ideal which I have been looking forward to for some years is to make the public library the centre of the intellectual life of the community, to have under one roof the home of societies having for their object a definite educational work, to place at their disposal lecture rooms where they may lecture and demonstrate, supplemented by an exhibition of books; and, if circumstances will allow, an exhibition of

material with which to demonstrate the subject they are particularly interested in.

It is clear that there is now a much more vigorous life permeating the policy of the Library Association than formerly, and it is for library assistants to seize the opportunities which will undoubtedly present themselves, and utilise every legitimate means of becoming fully acquainted with their work.

The cry is for specially trained assistants who will be capable to select, classify, catalogue and annotate books on a special subject of literature, science, technology, music, bibliography, natural history, theology; and in all these schemes it is of vital importance to bring home to library assistants the need of self education.

I have thought for many years that a great work would be accomplished if our education authorities could see the moral and educational value which could be provided by means of school libraries. To make a reading population it is necessary to start with the child. School life soon passes and the youngsters would naturally turn to the public library to continue their reading or study as the case may be. A few years would roll on and those children would have become the fathers and mothers of another generation. Having felt the benefits of the public library they would insist upon their children utilising them as they had done in their young days. The reading habit, if formed at school, would, I feel sure, be a means of ceaseless blessing throughout life. It would also be a source of ceaseless learning.

The present Minister for Education outlines in his Bill a scheme of far-reaching importance which will give better opportunities to the poorer students to enter the secondary schools. He extends the age limit for compulsory attendance at school and provides a liberal supply of scholarships. If the libraries of the country take their proper place in the educational scheme it will mean that a much greater demand will be made for books in the future, and more efficient help will be required from library assistants.

I know that much of our future development depends upon the salary question, and the attitude of some authorities towards the libraries as a department of municipal activity.

Speaking generally, the profession as it stands to-day offers little attraction to a young person with ambition. To those I would say that it is possible to be ambitious even in a small way, and that the assistant should not take his responsibilities less lightly simply because the salary is not a large

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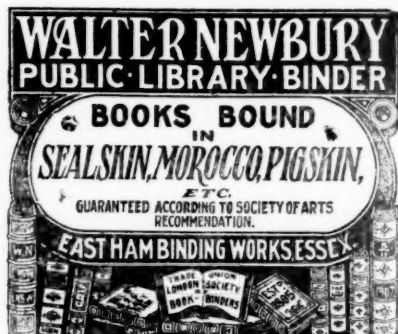
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### ROLL OF HONOUR.

In order that the Association's Roll of Honour may be as complete as possible, it is earnestly requested that all information relating to the military career of library workers shall be forwarded to the Honorary Editor of *The Library Assistant* as soon as possible.

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Hon. Secretary, Library Assistants' Association, Bromley Public Library, Poplar, E. 14.



# ALBUM OF HONOUR

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The Council earnestly requests  
that PORTRAITS OF ALL LIBRARY  
WORKERS ON ACTIVE SERVICE,  
for inclusion in the Association's  
ALBUM OF HONOUR, shall be  
sent as soon as possible to:

HENRY A. SHARP,  
Central Library,  
Town Hall, Croydon.

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If possible, portraits should be in duplicate, unmounted, and  
in permanent form.

# **LIBRARY VACANCIES AND APPOINTMENTS.**

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The Council of the Library Assistants' Association has decided to make arrangements for receiving applications from librarians needing assistants, and also to register names of assistants seeking new positions. The latter should send a full statement of their age, experience and qualifications, together with an indication of the salary and position (London or Provincial) required. Librarians should state their requirements, as well as the salary offered.

No responsibility in any respect is accepted by the Council or its Officers, the arrangements merely being intended to facilitate the filling of vacancies and as a convenience to Members, to whom any advantages that may accrue are at present limited.

All communications to be addressed to the Honorary Secretary, Bromley Public Library, Brunswick Road, Poplar, E.14.

one. Before many years are past I believe that most public libraries will be able to increase their rate limit to 2d. in the £, and this will enable a better scale of remuneration to be given to the library officials. But we must not allow the question of salary to enter too largely into the development of the work which we are seeking to do. Already we endeavour to aid the working man in increasing his efficiency; we provide for the children and introduce them to the great world of books; we promote the use of books not only as instruments of knowledge but as a means of culture and enjoyment, but there is still much more to be done.

Whilst I am on the question of salaries I should like to mention some recent appointments which have been made by County Councils in various parts of the country, and although these County Councils have advertised for librarians with previous experience of public library work, and applicants have been interviewed holding five and six certificates of the Library Association, schoolmasters have been appointed to the positions and library assistants have been turned down. It seems to me, that if the Library Association sets a test of six examinations, and practically says that if any assistant passes these examinations he is fully qualified to administer and control a public library system, it should be able to do something towards securing for such assistants a position when it comes into the market. It is a great discouragement to applicants with all the necessary qualifications, according to the Library Association, to find themselves ruled out, and an untrained man securing the coveted position.

Whether any pressure can be brought to bear on the Association I will leave you to discuss, but I feel quite sure that the Carnegie Trustees, through whose generosity the County Councils are enabled to make these appointments, would like to see men of proved capacity and ability appointed to control the library movement which the Trust has so much at heart. It ought not to be possible for anyone other than a specially trained library assistant to be appointed to any such position, and I sincerely hope that it will not be possible in the very near future.

The work of getting on in the library world is entirely a matter for your individual effort. If you are content to do nothing towards educating yourselves it is not very likely that you are going to occupy any very important place in the profession. The same can be said, of course, of all professions. If you wish to become master you must first of all master it. It is no use to grouse and wonder why others

are jumping over your heads; the failure very likely lies with yourself, and you must endeavour to realise that it is so, then you will probably wake up and make new resolutions.

There is an enormous amount of material in the library journals which you can "swat" up for months on end. I remember poring for hours and hours over articles which were written by shining lights in the library world when I was a young man, and I have not regretted it.

The valuable papers which were read at the last Conference are worth very careful reading by any assistant who loves his work. The result of the resolutions passed at that Conference can already be seen to some extent, and I think will assume a much more definite shape in a very little while, especially those in connection with the provision of technical and scientific literature. The setting up of a classification and cataloguing bureau in the "Record" and another on Bibliography will greatly help the assistant to get a better understanding of some of his work, and I call your particular attention to these columns.

The "Athenaeum Subject Index" is also worthy of attention, especially to assistants who are continually called upon to answer enquiries for information. I feel that there is a much brighter prospect for the library assistant of the future if he or she will work to fit himself or herself for the position. There is plenty of room at the top, and I hope to see a good majority if not all of you doing good work there in a few years time.

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## PROCEEDINGS.

The April General Meeting took the form of a visit to the Sir John Soane Museum, Lincoln's Inn Fields, under the guidance of the curator, Mr. A. T. Bolton, F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A. Sir John Soane (1753-1837) architect, and founder of the Museum, is best known as the architect to the Bank of England, which building he enlarged and practically rebuilt. He also filled the office of clerk of works at St. James's Palace and the Houses of Parliament; in 1794 he was commissioned to prepare designs for the remodelling of the House of Lords. Soon after his appointment as professor of architecture at the Academy, Soane began to form collections of antiquities, books, and works of art, for the benefit of his pupils and other architectural students. The celebrated alabaster sarcophagus brought from Egypt by Belzoni was bought by him in 1824; he also acquired Hogarth's well-known series of pictures "The Rake's Progress" and "The Election," Reynolds' "Snake in the Grass," and a selection of other works by leading painters and sculptors of his day. These, with many other objects of art and antiquity, including a library of rare books mostly relating to architecture

and the allied arts, he arranged in his house, which was transformed by him into a Museum, and presented to the nation in 1833. Not the least interesting part of the Museum consists of a collection of original designs for decoration by the brothers Adam.

The Association was fortunate in being permitted to view the Museum in such favourable circumstances as we were enabled to through the kindness of Mr. Bolton, who went to much trouble in pointing out to the party the more outstanding objects contained in it.

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### AN IDEAL LIBRARIAN.\*

At Eastertide, 1906, the library world lost its "kindliest and most accomplished of men" in the person of Dr. Garnett of the British Museum. He was the son of a librarian and entered the library profession at the age of 16, as an assistant in the Printed Books Department of the British Museum, and gained the most vital part of his education from his work. Had he gone to Oxford or Cambridge he might become a Regius Professor of History, but he found his university amid the bookshelves of the British Museum, and he educated himself as few men have been educated. This unique early environment, acting on a temperament full of poetry, romance and humour, helped Dr. Garnett to take his place above any other Englishman as a librarian and man of letters. Many librarians have written books; some few men of letters have been librarians, but in Dr. Garnett there was no divided life.

It is generally held that a great librarian should be a custodian of books and a living index to their contents, rather than a reader and critic. Dr. Garnett was all these with distinction. His wonderful memory enabled him to retain his knowledge so that he became an oracle. Yet the knowledge gained during the 48 years that he was a servant to the Trustees of the British Museum was acquired not for himself alone. It was all held, without distinction of person, at the disposal of the first enquirer. As is often the case with men of real ability and understanding but of self-sacrificing and unassuming character, promotion was slow. Everyone knew him and everyone consulted him. He would help readers with the catalogue, which, by the way, was essentially his achievement, and put all his treasures at their disposal. He made himself indeed the "veriest slave of the slaves of literature."

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\*From *The Medley*, read at a meeting of the South Coast Branch, Jan., 1918.

Mr. Gissing has written about the eccentric individuals who frequent the British Museum Reading Room; nobody knew them and their histories so well as Dr. Garnett, but nothing would induce him to speak of them. There were many who owed their means of livelihood to his patient kindness. Nothing daunted him, no shabbiness, no unreasonableness, no grotesqueness. He was never contemptuous to those in difficulty and no ingratitude wearied him.

One instance—a poor woman came into the British Museum with a pitiful and embarrassing story. It was almost impossible to avoid a smile at the way in which she told it. Dr. Garnett listened with the utmost courtesy, and promised to do what he could and then showed her out. The majority of people would have exchanged a friendly smile over the interview, but Dr. Garnett carefully looked elsewhere and turned the conversation on to some other topic.

Mr. Hueffer says that when a boy, he was often sent to the British Museum by his grandfather, Ford Madox Brown, who, whenever he was in doubt about some detail of historical costume, would say, "Ah well, there is nothing for it but Garnett." So that being sent with some query about a Merovingian buckle, it seemed a part of the ordinary routine of the British Museum that Dr. Garnett should lend a patient attention to all his vicarious questions and then say, "If you will go into the Reading Room and turn to your right, on the 5th shelf from the door, the 4th row, you will find such and such a work, and on a page near the end of the 10th volume, I should say it was about page 274, about the middle of the plate there is an engraving of a buckle such as Mr. Brown requires."

Being uttered with the head a little on one side, with a slightly oblique glance, and the unfailing smile that seemed to be aroused by some perpetual inward joke which no one ever fathomed, the words gave the impression of coming as it were from the top layer of the mind, of being so near the surface and requiring so little effort of memory that it seemed that this tremendous mnemonic feat was the most natural thing in the world. It was as though one had the right to expect such an answer from that kind learned figure monastically surrounded by books, hemmed in by books, with books fathoms beneath and books for miles around.

Soon Mr. Hueffer began to ask questions for his own purposes: as to the Dover elections in the 18th century; as to early methods of building canals and sea walls; as to the history of art in the late fifties; as to a thousand subjects,

and always the answer was given without pause, with the same smile, and causing always the same impression of coming from the top layer of the mind. Gradually Mr. Hueffer found that he was only one of hundreds, and that all over the civilised and uncivilised world people were asking Dr. Garnett questions.

Even then, although he realised that this singular and admirable savant was the centre of something very large and wonderful, he did not altogether understand. He merely thought of it as "an admirable gift of memory; an unprecedented ability to correlate ideas, combined with and rendered available by an immense amiability and readiness to be of service."

It was characteristic of Dr. Garnett that he made it a principle never to refuse to work for anybody who asked him. Many people have deplored that such a principle should have forced the author of the "Twilight of the Gods" and "De Flagello Myrteo" to be at the beck and call of every trivial questioner and editor. It has been thought an almost insoluble riddle that a personality so fine, so sardonic, so perceptive should have given himself to the life of routine work that he led: that he should have allowed himself to be made a beast of burden for the catalogues, the congresses, the questioners and the editors. Perhaps Dr. Garnett's unfailing smile was his recognition of the inward joke—the joke of his long laborious life, to suffer his fellow men to use his priceless gifts upon so many transitory tasks that must needs be perishable.

But perhaps his humanity was larger than his art, and he knew the truth of the paradox—"He that loseth his life the same shall save it."

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## L.A.A. ROLL OF HONOUR (continued).

### PROMOTIONS AND DECORATIONS.

\***W. G. Fry** (Signalman, R.N.V.R.) of the Manchester Public Libraries, has been awarded the Croix de Guerre for services on a French ship which was torpedoed by an enemy submarine.

\***S. D. Nightingale** (Queen's R.W.S.) of the Croydon Public Libraries, has been promoted to the rank of lance-corporal, and has qualified as an instructor in signalling.

\***Charles Nowell** (22nd London Regiment), sub-librarian of the Norwich Public Library, has been promoted from the rank of 2nd Lieutenant to that of Lieutenant. We are glad to learn that Lieutenant Nowell has quite recovered from the wound received in September, 1916; he returned to France in December last.

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#### WOUNDED.

**Second - Lieut. D. C. Jones** (7th R. Warwickshire Regt.), of the Coventry Public Libraries, was wounded at the Battle of the Scarpe and Oise

\* Member, L.A.A.

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#### NEW MEMBERS.

**Associates:** Miss Emily **Newham**, Gilstrap Public Library, Newark-upon-Trent; William A. **Fortens**, Sion College.

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#### CHANGES AND APPOINTMENTS.

**WILLIAM BAGGULEY**, librarian of the Great Western Institute, Swindon, has been appointed chief librarian of Hull.

The other selected candidates were: Messrs. A. Ansell (Hull), G. W. Byers (Harrogate), R. Hargreaves (Stockport), W. G. B. Page (Hull), and J. W. Singleton (Accrington).

**GLADYS FLISHER**, formerly of the Croydon Public Libraries, has been appointed an assistant at the National Library for the Blind.

\***JONATHAN MERRISHAW**, of the London University Library, formerly of the Darwen Public Library, has been appointed borough librarian of Newark-upon-Trent.

\***FLORENCE L. TALMEY**, junior assistant, Hove, has been promoted to the rank of senior assistant in the same library.

**J. L. WILLIAMS**, a senior assistant in the Birmingham Reference Library, retired on March 31, after nearly thirty-six years' service.

At a well attended meeting of the staff, Mr. Williams was presented with a mahogany timepiece, a fountain pen, and a wallet of treasury notes. In making the presentation, Mr. Walter Powell (chief librarian) recalled the fact that twenty-nine years ago, he himself was "received" on the staff as a junior assistant by Mr. Williams. After a few reminiscences of that period, when the late Mr. J. D. Mullins was librarian, he paid eloquent testimony to the high character and faithful service of Mr. Williams, and expressed the hope that he would long enjoy his well-earned leisure.